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MONDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Foreign Minister of Iraq charges in letter to Secretary-General that countries behind Security Council resolutions on Gulf conflict, and Secretary-General himself, "bear responsibility" for "heinous crimes" being committed against his country.

+ Secretary-General asks UNEP Executive Director to report to him "as soon as possible" on oil slick in Persian Gulf which he considers "an ecological catastrophe of major proportions".

+ Security Council continues consultations on Persian Gulf crisis.

+ Under-Secretary-General for Human Rights says conflicts in the world today reinforces understanding that violations of human rights provides fertile soil for seeds of war.

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Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz has accused States that endorse the Security Council resolutions on the Gulf conflict and Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar of personal responsibility for "the heinous crimes being committed against Iraq".

In a letter to the Secretary-General, the Iraqi Minister said his country was the victim of "United States, NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) and Zionist aggression" in the framework of a "conspiratory hostile to the hopes of peoples for freedom, sovereignty ... and relations of equality". The Governments involved, he said, had the sole objective of "vengeance" against the Iraqi people and its leadership because they had opposed the "imperialist goals of those Governments". It was shameful, he said, that those premeditated crimes were being committed "under the cover" of Security Council resolutions adopted under United States "pressure, blackmail and bribery".

The Iraqi Minister said attacks were taking place against civilian, economic, humanitarian, medical, cultural and religious targets, and on

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citizens and their families in all parts of Iraq. It was, he said, part of "the colonist technique" under the cover provided by resolutions fabricated in the name of United Nations.

In his letter to the Secretary-General, Mr. Aziz continued: "You, personally, bear responsibility to history and to mankind for the heinous crimes being committed against the free and militant people of Iraq."

Attached to the letter was a list of areas of Iraq which were said to have come under attack, indicating the extent of damage an casualties. One hundred ninety-eight civilians were said to have been killed and some 400 been wounded.

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Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar said today through his Spokesman that he considered the oil slick in the Persian Gulf "an ecological catastrophe of major proportions". The Secretary-General has asked the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Mostafa K. Tolba, to report to him on the oil slick "as soon as possible".

In related news, UNEP expressed today its deep concern about the "actual and potentually dangerous environmental effects of the Gulf war". Executive Director Tolba appealed for international action, stating that the Programme was not only monitoring the situation, but was working fast to get an international independent and objective assessment of the current and potential damage.

In a similar announcement, the World Health Organization (WHO) has expressed concern about the impact of the oil slick on human health. The agency's Director-General, Hiroshi Nakajima, appealed today to all Governments concerned to pursue every effort to mitigate the effects on health of the oil spill in the Gulf and to stop its further spread. In a statement issued in Geneva, Mr. Nakajima described the discharge of oil into the Gulf as an environmental disaster of unprecedented proportions; the effects of which could be long-lasting and of concern to public health. The most imminent danger appeared to be the threat to a major source of water and to the countries of the region that depend on desalination of sea water for their daily water supply. The WHO is also expressing concern about the long-term impact on seafood, nutrition and on atmospheric pollution, not only in the immediate area but in the region as a whole.

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The Security Council this afternoon continued its consultations on the situation in the Persian Gulf. The Council is currently discussing a request of the Arab Maghreb Union, supported by the Sudan and Yemen, for a formal meeting on the Gulf conflict. The request was supported today by Jordan.

Meanwhile, Japan today informed the United Nations that it had decided to support financially the multinational forces in the Gulf and the refugees in

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the region with an additional contribution of $9 billion. In addition, Japanese civilian aircraft would transport refugees from Cairo to their home countries.

In another communication today, Canada informed the Organization that, as of 16 January, its armed forces in the Persian Gulf region were participating in military action with the armed forces of other Members of the United Nations, in accordance with Security Council resolutions.

France reported in a letter to the Council President that it had transmitted to the Iraqi Ambassador an official protest from the French Government regarding the Iraqi breach of the Geneva Conventions with respect to prisoners-of-war.

The French Government said it would apply the Geneva Conventions to all prisoners and would treat them humanely.

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The Under-Secretary-General for Human Rights, Jan Martenson, said in a opening statement this morning at the forty-seventh session of the Commission on Human Rights that the effective defence of human rights was an essential element to the preservation of peace.

Mr. Martenson said the armed conflict following the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait, which had led to loss of life, widespread violations of human rights and devastating effects on the environment, was occurring despite strenuous international efforts to preserve peace and ensure respect for the Charter.

He stated further that the movement towards the establishment of fully democratic systems was encountering serious difficulties in several places, where force was replacing reason and dialogue. The conflicts in the world today reinforced the understanding that violations of human rights provided fertile soil for the seeds of war.

Also addressing the meeting, Enrique Bernales Ballesteros (Peru), the newly elected Chairman, noted that the Commission was meeting in the shadow of the war in the Gulf. Philosophically, he said, the preservation of human life was paramount, and from the human rights standpoint, war could never be justified. The cold war had been brought to an end not by force, but by the victory of peace and justice over war. All hoped that peace would be restored in the Gulf as soon as possible and that human rights and justice would prevail.

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